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MAILED

JAN 12 2011

OFFICE OF PETITIONS

In re Patent No. 6367126 :
Issue Date: 04/09/2002 :
Application Number: 09/535082 : DECISION ON PETITION
Filing Date: 03/23/2000 :
For: A MAGNETIC FORCE EYEGLASS :
HOLDER :

This is a decision on the petition filed on November 8, 2010, under 37 CFR § 1.378(b) to accept the delayed payment of a maintenance fee for the above-identified patent.

The petition is dismissed.

If reconsideration of this decision is desired, a petition for reconsideration under 37 CFR 1.378(e) must be filed within TWO (2) MONTHS from the mail date of this decision. No extension of this 2-month time limit can be granted under 37 CFR 1.136(a) or (b). Any such petition for reconsideration must be accompanied by the petition fee of \$400.00 as set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(f). The petition for reconsideration should include an exhaustive attempt to provide the lacking item(s) noted below, since, after a decision on the petition for reconsideration, no further reconsideration or review of the matter will be undertaken by the Director.

The patent issued on April 9, 2002. The first maintenance fee was timely paid. The second maintenance fee could have been paid from April 9 through October 9, 2009, or, with a surcharge during the period from October 10, 2009, through April 9, 2010. Accordingly, the patent expired at midnight April 9, 2010, for failure to timely submit the second maintenance fee.

At the outset, 37 CFR 1.378(d) states: "Any petition under this section must be signed by an attorney or agent registered to practice before the Patent and Trademark Office, or by the patentee, the assignee, or other party in interest."

The petition is signed by Myrna Childs Rivkin. It is noted that the petition states that the inventor is deceased. Pursuant to 35 U.S.C. 117 legal representatives of deceased inventors and of those under legal incapacity may make application for patent upon compliance with the requirements and on the same terms and conditions applicable to the inventor. If the person who signed the petition is the legal representative of the deceased inventor, petitioners must so state in any renewed petition. Alternatively, the petition must be signed by the legal representative of the deceased inventor.

Furthermore, the petition states, in pertinent part:

Bernard Rivkin, the original owner of this patent, passed away this past year. In the process of winding up his personal affairs, we were unable to process the maintenance fees. Please accept this as un-avoidable delay (*sic*) and accept this payment.

A petition to accept the delayed maintenance fee under 35 U.S.C. § 41(c) and 37 CFR 1.378(b) must be accompanied by (1) an adequate, verified showing that the delay was unavoidable, since reasonable care was taken to ensure that the maintenance fee would be paid timely and that the petition was filed promptly after the patentee was notified of, or otherwise became aware of, the expiration of the patent, (2) payment of the appropriate maintenance fee, unless previously submitted, and (3) payment of the surcharge set forth in 37 CFR 1.20(i)(1).

This petition lacks requirement (1).

With regards to item (1), the Director may accept late payment of the maintenance fee if the delay is shown to the satisfaction of the Director to have been "unavoidable".¹

The showing of record is inadequate to establish unavoidable delay within the meaning of 37 CFR 1.378(b)(3).

¹ 35 U.S.C. § 41(c)(1).

Acceptance of late payment of a maintenance fee is considered under the same standard as that for reviving an abandoned application under 35 U.S.C. § 133 because 35 U.S.C. § 41(c)(1) uses the identical language, i.e. "unavoidable delay". Ray v. Lehman, 55 F.3d 606, 608-09, 34 USPQ2d 1786, 1787 (Fed. Cir. 1995) (quoting In re Patent No. 4,409,763, 7 USPQ2d 1798, 1800 (Comm'r Pat. 1988)). Decisions on reviving abandoned applications have adopted the "reasonably prudent person" standard in determining if the delay in responding to an Office action was unavoidable. Ex parte Pratt, 1887 Dec. Comm'r Pat. 31, 32-33 (Comm'r Pat. 1887) (the term "unavoidable" "is applicable to ordinary human affairs, and requires no more or greater care or diligence than is generally used and observed by prudent and careful men in relation to their most important business"); In re Mattullath, 38 App. D.C. 497, 514-515 (D.C. Cir. 1912); and Ex parte Henrich, 1913 Dec. Comm'r Pat. 139, 141. In addition, decisions on revival are made on a "case-by-case basis, taking all the facts and circumstances into account." Smith v. Mossinghoff, 671 F.2d 533, 538, 213 USPQ 977, 982 (D.C. Cir. 1982). Finally, a petition to revive an application as unavoidably abandoned cannot be granted where a petitioner has failed to meet his or her burden of establishing the cause of the unavoidable delay. Haines v. Quigg, 673 F. Supp. 314, 316-17, 5 USPQ2d 1130, 1131-32 (N.D. Ind. 1987).

In determining whether a delay in paying a maintenance fee was unavoidable, one looks to whether the party responsible for payment of the maintenance fee exercised the due care of a reasonably prudent person. Ray, 55 F.3d at 608-609, 34 USPQ2D at 1787. It is incumbent upon the patent owner to implement steps to schedule and pay the fee, or obligate another to do so. See California Medical Products v. Technol. Med. Prod., 921 F.Supp 1219, 1259 (D. Del. 1995). That is, 37 CFR 1.378(b)(3) requires a showing of the steps in place to pay the maintenance fee, and the record currently lacks a showing that any steps were emplaced by petitioner or anyone else. In the absence of a showing that petitioner or anyone else was engaged in tracking the maintenance fee due dates, and that party had in fact been tracking the due dates with a reliable tracking system, such as would be used by prudent and careful men in relation to their most important business, petitioner cannot reasonably show that the delay was unavoidable delay. In re Katrapat, 6 USPQ2d 1863, 1867-1868 (Comm'r Pat. 1988); California, supra. Put otherwise, the issues of petitioner's health and financial problems are immaterial in the absence of a showing that these, and not the lack of any steps in place to pay the fee, caused or contributed to the delay.

As such, petitioners must explain why the delay in payment of the maintenance fee was unavoidable.

In essence, petitioner must show that, prior to his death, patentee was aware of the need to pay the maintenance fee, and to that end was tracking it, or had engaged someone to track it before the expiration, but when the fee came due, was "unavoidably" prevented from making the maintenance fee payment until the petition was filed.

Petitioner must provide a showing as to when patentee died, and must also explain whether anyone assisted patentee in managing his affairs, with respect to the patent. Statements from all persons with first hand knowledge of the patent, and its expiration, if any, must be provided with any request for reconsideration. Petitioners must further explain when it was discovered that the patent had expired, and provide a documented showing that the delay in filing the subject petition to reinstate the patent was unavoidable.

While the Office is mindful of the unfortunate circumstances surrounding this petition, in the absence of a showing that steps were taken to ensure the timely payment of the maintenance fee, the Office is precluded from providing the relief requested by petitioner.

Petitioner should note that if this petition is not renewed, or if renewed and not granted, then the maintenance fee and post-expiration surcharge are refundable. The \$400.00 petition fee for seeking reconsideration is not refundable. Any request for refund should be in writing to the Office of Finance, ATTN: Refund Section. A copy of this decision should accompany petitioner's request.

In summary, the showing of record is inadequate to establish unavoidable delay. Rather, than unavoidable delay, the showing of record is that petitioner failed to take adequate precautions to ensure that maintenance fees were timely paid. As petitioner has not shown that it exercised the standard of care observed by a reasonable person in the conduct of his or her most important business, the petition will be dismissed.²

In summary, the showing of record has been considered, but does not rise to the level of unavoidable delay. Rather, the showing of record is of a lack of diligence on the part of petitioner.

² See note 7, supra.

Since petitioner has not shown unavoidable delay, the petition will be dismissed.

Petitioner should note that if this petition is not renewed, or if renewed and not granted, then the maintenance fee and post-expiration surcharge are refundable.

Petitioner is cautioned to avoid submitting personal information in a patent application that may contribute to identity theft. If personal information such as social security numbers, bank account numbers, or credit card numbers are included in documents submitted to the USPTO (other than a check or credit card authorization form PTO-2038 submitted for payment purposes), petitioners should consider redacting such personal information from the documents before submitting them to the USPTO. This type of personal information is never required by the USPTO to support a petition or an application. Petitioner is advised that any information submitted in an application is available to the public after publication of the application (unless a non-publication request in compliance with 37 CFR 1.213(a) is made in the application) or issuance of a patent. Furthermore, information from an abandoned application may also be available to the public if the application is referenced in a published application or an issued patent (see 37 CFR 1.14). Checks and credit card authorization forms PTO-2038 submitted for payment purposes are not retained in the application file and therefore are not publicly available.

The \$400.00 petition fee for seeking reconsideration is not refundable. Any request for refund should be in writing to the address noted below.

ALTERNATIVE VENUE

Petitioner may wish, in the alternative, to request reconsideration in the form of a petition under 37 CFR 1.378(c), requesting that the unintentionally delayed payment of a maintenance fee be accepted. A petition to accept the delayed payment of a maintenance fee under 35 U.S.C. 41(c) and 37 CFR 1.378(c) must be filed within twenty four months from the end of the six month grace period (e.g., the expiration date of the patent and be accompanied by (1) a verified statement that the delay was unintentional, (2) payment of the appropriate maintenance fee, unless previously submitted, (3) payment of the \$1,640.00 surcharge (the \$700.00 surcharge already paid may be credited thereto leaving a balance due of \$940.00) set forth in 37 CFR 1.20(i)(2). The statement can be verified by using the

attached petition form which includes a declaration according to 37 CFR 1.68.

The filing of a petition under the unintentional standard cannot be intentionally delayed and therefore should be filed promptly. A person seeking revival due to unintentional delay can not make a statement that the delay was unintentional unless the entire delay, including the delay from the date it was discovered that the patent was expired until the filing of the petition to reinstate under 37 CFR 1.378(c), was unintentional. A statement that the delay was unintentional is not appropriate if petitioner intentionally delayed the filing of a petition for revival under 37 CFR 1.378(c).

The address in the petition is different from the correspondence address. A courtesy copy of this decision is being mailed to the address in the petition. All future correspondence, however, will be mailed solely to the address of record. A change of correspondence address should be filed if the correspondence address needs to be updated. A copy of the form to update the correspondence address is enclosed with this decision.

Petitioner should note that if this petition is not renewed, or if renewed and not granted, then the maintenance fee and post-expiration surcharge are refundable.

Further correspondence with respect to this matter should be addressed as follows:

By mail: Mail Stop Petition
 Commissioner for Patents
 P.O. Box 1450
 Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

By FAX: (571) 273-8300
 Attn: Office of Petitions

By hand: Customer Service Window
 Mail Stop Petition
 Randolph Building
 401 Dulany Street
 Alexandria, VA 22314

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Telephone inquiries should be directed to the undersigned at 571-272-3231.



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